

HB 612
February 21, 2007

My name is Georgia Lovelady and although I'm employed with the ACLU of Montana, I am testifying today as a **private citizen** and parent of two teenage boys. I'm sure that when my 15 yr. old hears of my testimony, he would rather I had been more private and less of a citizen. But I think this Healthy Youth Bill is too important not to support.

As a parent, it's imperative to me that my children get age-appropriate and medically accurate information so that they can avoid unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Diseases. I have what I consider to be a very open relationship with my 15yr. old. and we have discussed when and with whom it is appropriate to have sex. I don't need help imparting my family values and faith to my son. What I need help with is getting my son accurate and complete information about the medical realities of sexual contact. But I don't have that information. I am not a County Health nurse and I am not up to date on what all is out there.

The world is a very different place than when I grew up. When I was a young adult there wasn't much out there that couldn't be cured with a shot of penicillin. Now there is AIDS and the thought that my sons could die from making an irresponsible choice is frightening. I need to arm them with the best information possible so they can make responsible choices.

I thought my son was getting the facts. I was told Sex Ed was covered in 10th grade Health class. So when my 15 yr. old finished the class this last semester, I asked, being the kind of Mom I am, what was covered. And the class didn't cover contraceptives or spend in class time on STDs. I was beyond disappointed. And I gave him that look. The look that says: "We need to talk."

And he said, "Oh, no Mom, we're not having this discussion." The point is that a 15 yr. old boy doesn't want to hear this stuff from his mother. He'd be much more receptive to an in-class presentation with his peers so he can joke away his embarrassment in the halls with his buddies after class. I know my kid, and he's not that different from other kids, he can hear things from an educator that he can't hear from me. And I'm not alone as a parent. The mothers of girls tell me: I may stress abstinence, but I want my daughter to hear all the ways she can protect herself.

I can do the research, get on the Net, bring the books home from the library, but if I miss something because this is not my field, my sons will pay the price. But there are people whose job it is to teach this stuff. And it won't be coming from their mother.

I ask the Committee to help our young adults make responsible choices by giving them the proper information to do so. We can't make these decisions for our children. But we can equip them with the information and moral guidance to make their own good decisions.

Respectfully,

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